

More new races of birds from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

BY

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After the publication of my report on my collection of birds mainly from the Andamans (1964, 1965), I have visited the area again spending more time in the Nicobars and obtaining 280 specimens from Car Nicobar, Central Nicobars, and Great Nicobar.

I have also had the opportunity of examining at the British Museum (Natural History) the specimens collected by Hume, Davison, and others about a hundred years ago, enabling me to take some decisions which were not possible with the material available earlier. An account of the trip together with a general report on the birds of the Nicobars is ready but, as I understand that there is not much chance of its early publication, I am publishing the descriptions of new races earlier. The description of a new race of *Aplonis panayensis* from the Central and Great Nicobars is being published in the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*.

1. *Rallus striatus* : Bluebreasted Banded Rail.

The race *obscurior* described by Hume from the Andamans has been accepted as the form found in the Nicobars.

A single male, obtained at Nancowri, Central Nicobars, has a 128 mm. wing and is much darker (almost black) on the upper parts and much deeper grey below than any of the specimens from India (9) and the Andamans (1) available in Bombay. At the British Museum there were no specimens from the Nicobars, but specimens from the Andamans were all smaller and much paler than the others of this species available for examination. Javan birds are also very similar to those from India, and it would therefore appear that the birds from Central Nicobars are different and I name them :

Rallus striatus nicobarensis subsp. nov.

Holotype : ♂ collected by B. R. Grubb at Nancowri, Central Nicobars, on 23 March 1966, Collection No. 193 and Bombay Natural History Society Register No. 22562.

2. *Macropygia rufipennis* : Cuckoo Dove.

The two males I obtained in the Middle Andamans can be separated from the two males and one female from the Central Nicobars by the outer webs of the primaries having a fine fringe of rufous against the basal two-thirds being entirely rufous in the Nicobar birds. This rufous shows as a strikingly different patch of colour in the folded wing which in Andaman birds is more or less concolorous with the other feathers of the back. This character is consistent in the large series (32 Andamans, 10 Nicobars) at the British Museum and Mr. Derek Goodwin who had a look at the specimens agreed that the Andaman birds were different, and I name them :

Macropygia rufipennis andamanica subsp. nov.

Holotype : ♂ collected by me at Betapur, Middle Andamans, on 24 February 1964, and bearing Bombay Natural History Society Register No. 22135

Paratype : ♂ collected by me at Bakultala, Middle Andamans, on 21 February 1964, and bearing Bombay Natural History Society Register No. 22134.

None of my specimens show the ' lilac-purple gloss on the crown of the male ' mentioned in most earlier descriptions. Though unfortunately not specially looked for, this was not noticed in the specimens handled at the British Museum.

Curiously, though the original type locality is Southern ' Nicobars ' this species has always been called the Andaman Cuckoo Dove. These names will now have to be reversed.

3. *Oriolus xanthornus* : Blackheaded Oriole

This oriole has been accepted as a migrant to the Andamans, and I have already drawn attention (1965 : 549) to the single specimen I obtained being too small for the nominate race *xanthornus* (Type locality Chandernagor, Bengal) and its similarity to Ceylon birds, *ceylonensis* Bonaparte.

I have now had the opportunity of examining the material at the British Museum and there appears to be no difference in size.

<i>Andamans</i>	<i>Ceylon</i>
	<i>Wings</i>
6 ♂♂ 122-134 av. 128·6	4 ♂♂ 125-134 av. 128·75
5 ♀♀ 125-130 av. 127·4	3 ♀♀ 122-130 av. 125·3
	<i>Tails</i>
6 ♂♂ 72-84 av. 78·8	4 ♂♂ 79-82 av. 80·2
5 ♀♀ 76-82 av. 79·2	3 ♀♀ 72-78 av. 76·3

The Andaman birds are however a deeper mango yellow, and have the edges to the outer webs of the inner secondaries yellow against pale yellow, almost whitish, in the Ceylon birds. On these differences I separate the Andaman birds as

Oriolus xanthornus andamanensis subsp. nov.

Holotype : a ♂ collected by me at Wrightmyo, South Andamans, on 16 February 1964 and bearing Bombay Natural History Society Register No. 22021.

From the material examined it also appeared that the females and immature males (with streaked throats) of Indian birds have pale underparts, while Andaman birds appear to be as dark as the adults, a fact to which Blyth (1846) had drawn attention many years ago.

REFERENCES

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